

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

After the record-breaking wildfire season of 2000, Congress approved funds for federal and state agencies and local communities to develop and implement a national strategy for preventing the loss of life, natural resources, private property and livelihoods. The result of that planning and preparation is commonly known as the “National Fire Plan” (NFP) (U.S. Department of Agriculture [USDA] 2002). This plan was approved in September 2000 and is fully titled *Managing the Impacts of Wildfire on Communities and the Environment: A Report to the President in Response to the Wildfires of 2000*. The NFP includes five key points: firefighting preparedness, rehabilitation and restoration of burned areas, reduction of hazardous fuels, community assistance, and accountability. In 2001, Congress released another directive requiring the Departments of Agriculture and the Interior to engage Governors in the development of a National ten-year comprehensive strategy that would implement the NFP. For this effort, the *Idaho Statewide Implementation Strategy for the National Fire Plan* (Kempthorne et al. 2002) was developed. It was approved in May 2002 and involved cooperation and collaboration of the Secretary of Interior, Secretary of Agriculture, the Governors of Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, and Oregon, and the Director of the Council on Environmental Quality. The primary goals of the Idaho Plan are to improve prevention and suppression of wildfire, reduce hazardous fuels, restore fire-adapted ecosystems, and promote community assistance.

## 2.0 PURPOSE AND GOAL

The purpose of this mitigation plan is to identify and mitigate wildfire risks and negative consequences in communities and Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) areas within four Fire Districts (Figure 1) of Gooding County, Idaho. For the purpose of this plan a WUI is defined as “the geographical area where structures (subdivisions and additions) and other human development meets or intermingles with wildland or vegetative fuels.” The mitigation plan addresses Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) criteria contained in 44 CFR Part 201.6 and follows guidance from the *Idaho Statewide Implementation Strategy for the National Fire Plan* (Kempthorne et al. 2002) by:

- Identifying fire hazards that affect Gooding County and its residents
- Providing sufficient information to make mitigation decisions
- Discussing existing resources that are most current and best available
- Describing the process used to develop the plan
  - How it was prepared, who was involved in the process, and how the public was involved
- Maintaining the plan
  - How it will be monitored, evaluated, and updated annually within a five-year cycle

The plan will be maintained by a group of Gooding County residents or Wildland Fire Interagency Group. The group will be represented by agencies countywide with wildland fire suppression experience and responsibilities. County Commissioners will take the lead for monitoring the plan while the other group members evaluate the risks and vulnerabilities to wildland fire within their area of concern. The maintenance process will allow local governments, when appropriate, to incorporate the requirements of the plan into other planning

mechanisms such as comprehensive or capital improvement plans which will include public participation through scheduled hearings and meetings.

The overall goal of this plan is to reduce the frequency of wildfires spreading from city or private property to public lands and from spreading from public lands to municipal property. Fire fighter safely will always come first. This goal will be achieved by reducing fuels in high risk areas and conducting public education and the training programs throughout the county.

### **3.0 GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF ASSESSMENT AREA**

Gooding County was established January 28, 1913 with its county seat at Gooding. It encompasses 733 square miles. The topography of the county is relatively flat with some rolling hills. Gooding County is predominately made up of rural and agricultural areas with a few smaller urban developments. The cities of Gooding, Bliss, Hagerman and Wendell have experienced growth and development. The majority of the development has occurred along the major highways and the two Union Pacific rail lines that travel through the county. Most of the industries within the county are related to agriculture products, their production, harvest or shipping.

#### **Landownership**

Gooding County contains approximately 469,997 acres divided among four landowners (Table 1). Figure 1 shows Gooding County land ownership and the four fire districts. State and federal lands located north are covered by mutual aid agreements including BLM and both Camas and Gooding fire districts. Figures 5, 7, 9 and 13 show individual fire districts.

**Table 1. Land Status of Gooding County, Idaho**

<b>Owner</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Percent</b>
BLM	252,461	54
USFWS	84	>1
Water	2,427	>1
Private	195,347	42
State	19,678	4
TOTAL	469,997	100

#### **Population and Demographics**

There are 14,155 people, 5,046 occupied households, and 3,719 families in Gooding County (2000 Census). Nearly half or 6,652 persons reside in one of the major cities (Table 2), while the other half resides in rural areas comprised of farmers, ranchers and persons desiring a rural lifestyle. The population density is 19.3 persons per square mile. The city of Gooding is the county seat and also contains the largest number of persons.